



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913  
PH (517) 373.1707 | FAX (517) 373.3935  
[www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/toy/](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/toy/)

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Contact: Heather Lombardini  
(517) 373-1707

## **Sen. Toy's funeral protest legislation signed into law**

**LANSING** – Legislation shielding funeral guests from the barbs of angry protesters was signed into law Tuesday, said state Senator Laura M. Toy, R-6th District.

Under the new laws, protestors have to stay at least 500 feet away from a funeral service or risk prosecution.

“It’s only right that we show some decency and respect to the friends and family members grieving a loved one,” said Sen. Toy, sponsor of Senate Bill 1229. “People can still protest, they just have to do so at a respectful distance.”

Additionally, the new laws require protestors to apply for and be issued a permit from the local unit of government. A permit would not have to be issued if the service is on private property and one may be issued if the service is on public property.

The legislation was introduced in response to a wave of protests at military funerals where groups have hurled insults and threats at the family and friends of fallen soldiers attending their memorial services.

Members of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas, have held demonstrations at soldiers’ funerals across the country including three in Michigan – Flint, Flushing and Grand Ledge.

Michigan is the ninth state to have funeral protest legislation signed into law and 28 other states are working on similar legislation.

“I’m glad to see such important pieces of legislation signed into law,” Sen. Toy said. “The friends and families of our servicemen and women killed in combat deserve to have a funeral and mourn in peace and quiet.”

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